

AIR

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KORA-10960

Chief, EE

*filed*

14 JAN 1954

Chief of Mission, Frankfurt

Info: COM

Operational/CART/CADORY/CADROIT/CARBOHYDRATE, [ ]

[ ] Report on SSD Censorship Methods

1. [ ] was debriefed by CADROIT on 3 December 1953 on methods employed by SSD censorship installations (AFAS - Ant fuer Anti-Demokratische Sendungen). The report was subsequently submitted to CARBOHYDRATE, who in turn handed it over to the undersigned later in the month.
2. The report was originally delivered to [ ] for his use, and simultaneously copies were circulated among the CART section, within GADHAIN, and to such other parties as have a direct interest in these matters.
3. Since it is felt that certain details of the operative methods employed by SSD censors may be of interest, copies of the translated report are being forwarded herewith for the information and disposition of the recipients.

- [ ] -

Date of Origin: 11 January 1954

APPROVED: [ ] -

ATTACHMENT:  
[ ] Report

Distribution:  
3 - EE (w/Attachment) DIRECT  
3 - COM (w/Attachment)  
1 - BOB (w/Attachment)

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY  
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
SOURCE/METHOD/EXEMPTION 3828  
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT  
DATE 2008

ENCL: 1

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REPORT ON SSD CENSORSHIP

Source was up to the time of her flight a letter-opener in the Goerlitz AFAS (AFAS - Amt fuer Anti-Demokratische Sendungen) office, and was consequently an employee of the SSD with the rank of Refreiter (private first class). She is 18 years old and makes a basically favorable impression. Her statements appear to be credible and are convincing.

She claims that she became an employee in AFAS in 1950 at a time when she had been without work for a considerable period of time. Without realizing that she was dealing with an official of the SSD, she was told that she would be taken into the postal service.

The Goerlitz AFAS office is located in a separate part of the Goerlitz post office. Its employees are outwardly postal workers, but are nonetheless subordinate to the SSD. At the beginning, part of their salaries was paid by the postal administration, the remainder after deductions was then remitted to them by mail. At the present time, payment of one's entire salary is made by the SSD.

The following persons belong to the official activities of an AFAS office: sorters, openers, readers and copyists.

Experienced sorters develop with practice an acute sense of touch. They supposedly can ascertain by a cursory exterior examination of letters with their hands that the contents probably consist of printed matter (or "inflammatory propaganda", as source calls it). In the largest censorship office, Berlin N 4, to which source was detailed for a period, an experienced sorter can pick out some 300 pieces of printed matter a day. The conditions which betray letters picked out in this manner are their being too thick, too thin, or too smooth which makes these pieces of mail conspicuous. Source mentioned as an example that in normal letters the letter paper must usually be folded in order to conform to the shape of the envelope. Printed matter, on the contrary, lies flat in the envelope. It is therefore recommended that printed matter on one side be provided with a special fold. Further, the question of addresses and handwriting plays a large role in the process of sorting. "Professional" handwriting almost always falls into the clutches of the "snapper" who supervises the censors, and nearly always successfully (i.e., there is propaganda or other illegal material in the envelope). Source stated in a convincing fashion that she recognized the handwriting of a number of pieces of mail placed before her (at the time of her debriefing by CAIROIT). As a matter of fact, in one case the handwriting was that of a woman who had been active for (CAIROIT) for quite some time, and was known to Mr.-(member of the CAIROIT staff). It also appears certain that too frequent use of refined handwriting is suspicious, and that the happy medium lies between truly primitive and refined handwriting. Source also recommended that greater use be made of the term "family" both in addresses and return addresses. In addition to the necessary improvement in the

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quality of our communications, it is also worthy of our consideration that addresses without the first name be permitted only as a last resort.

The letter-openers in the Goerlitz AFAS office work at tables, the surface of which has spaced holes. Beneath there is a heater with water which is constantly in operation. A cloth placed between the steam and the letter to be opened assures the uniform effect of the steam. Experienced openers can unseal some 100 letters an hour. The supreme commandment for all openers is that they leave no trace of their tampering. In this process they must proceed with extreme caution. Furthermore, all seals which have been pasted on must be replaced in their proper place. Envelopes which are damaged in opening must be destroyed. Those which can be opened only with great difficulty or not at all are on the other hand forwarded without any censorship. Source mentions as examples, envelopes the glue of which contains fish derivatives or egg whites. This is doubtless an indication of the possibility of obtaining corresponding envelopes at least for our special letters. Also long and over-sized envelopes almost certainly escape censorship, since the process of opening them is too tedious and complicated. Letters are re-sealed with paste, and thereafter placed briefly under a press in order to remove the tell-tale waves in the paper caused by the steam. Nevertheless, if you hold the front of the envelope up to strong light, you can under certain circumstances recognize the impression of the letter which was lying on top of it. The use of strips of gummed paper was not customary in Goerlitz, and furthermore was unknown to the source of this report. Quartz lamps are in use only in the larger AFAS offices such as Dresden, for example.

There is nothing particular to be said about the reading and evaluation of letters. Objectionable passages are of course routed to the attention of the SSD. Source claims to know that in special cases, if they believe they have stumbled upon the track of an espionage or resistance group, letters are forwarded in order not to arouse any suspicion of surveillance either in the sender or the recipient.

A possibility worthy of mention is represented by the camouflage of special letters as "love letters". These normally pass through unopened. They fall into the clutches of the censors only when the openers evince a direct personal interest in them. Letters of condolence are now generally opened, allegedly because of their frequent use by West Berlin organizations.

Interesting also was the statement made by source that in Goerlitz letters forwarded by the night deliveries were not usually censored because of lack of time and personnel. The question remains open whether it also holds true for other cities, and whether or not our people, if the occasion should arise, ought to be given this piece of advice, to use late evening hours as well as Saturdays and Sundays for posting letters. Special delivery and registered letters are likewise censored.

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The main problem of the Soviet zone mail censorship is the lack of personnel. Theoretically all pieces of mail are supposed to be censored. Under present circumstances, however, this is not possible. The people employed are regularly subjected to schooling and training. Within the post office building, the regular postal employees shun the personnel of the AFAS office.

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